

# AS BRIDGE NEARED COMPLETION

By Gershom Bradford

The old long bridge is falling a victim to the process of time. We all lament the fact. Way back on Oct. 12, 1892, near its completion, we celebrated with a field day of sports. It was a joint celebration for on that day, 400 years before, Rodrigo de Triana in the bow of the "Pinta," saw a dark line in the moonlight and cried, "Tierra, tierra!" One was a great day for the world, the other for Duxbury.

We gathered at the Point end of the bridge, under the direction of Thomas Knight, he of pleasant memory. He was the principal of Partridge Academy. There were bag, 3-legged and potato races. Then there was a "greased pole," a quaint device consisting of a round spar horizontally extending over the water; it was well covered with fat. The winner was expected to reach the end, seize the little flag stuck in the end. Boy after boy tried to persevere balance, but failed and fell. At last a smart lad tried a new trick: he RAN out, grabbed the flag, and won amid cheers.

The big event was the bicycle race. Can you imagine high excitement over a bicycle race? How simple were our needs for fun! The era of the little wheel behind had passed. We had advanced to wheels of equal size. They were called "safeties," because there were no more "headers." In fact, we spoke of them as "wheels," rather than bicycles.

There were, perhaps 10 entries, nearly all the wheels in town. The course was to the beach end and back, on the sidewalk. There was an obstacle at the draw where the walk narrowed. The width of the

handlebars forced the rider to jump off, run around the draw and on again.

Among the entries was Frank Needham with an innovation: a beautiful nickle-plated high wheel with the LITTLE wheel in FRONT. Frank's handle-bars were high; he zipped across the draw and won.

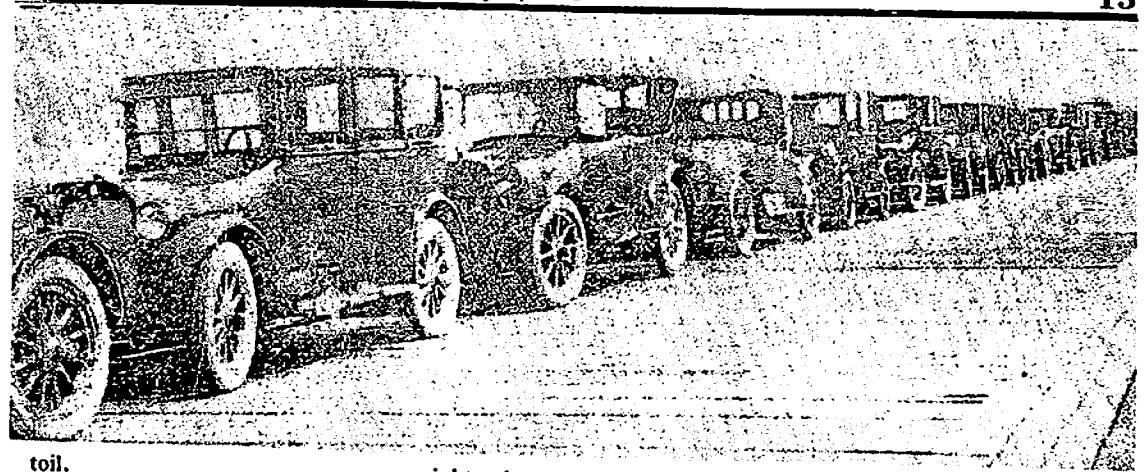
It is pleasant to remember that over those sturdy planks, for all these 83 years, have rolled or walked, more health and joy than we can ever guess. Over on the sands, romances have bloomed, rest has been found, and now and then a grief assuaged there by the sea. The mode of travel over the bridge has progressed from feet to horse, wheel and on to the faster push of noisy combustion. The styles have changed, the beach grass still fights for its dunes, but the sand shifts, the beach erodes, the bridge decays, only the ocean endures.

Byron knew all this and wrote:  
"Time writes no wrinkles on  
thine azure brow,  
Such as Creation's dawn beheld,  
thou rollest now."

## THE NEW DUXBURY BRIDGE IMMORTALIZED IN VERSE 1892

By W. S. Freeman

Today we gather here upon this ridge,  
That overlooks the long long  
talked of bridge  
And while our thoughts revert to  
yonder beach  
Now brought within 10 minutes  
easy reach  
By foot or horse  
To pleasure seekers or to men of



toil,

Who gather ocean's wealth to mix  
with soil,  
Can this be loss?

Go ask your horses. Tell me what  
they say  
When drawing Ocean's mosses  
day by day  
Up through the sand, beyond the  
breakers reach  
Then wind, with heavy load  
around the beach  
The coming to this bridge at close  
of day  
You ask them if its money thrown  
away?  
And every horse will surely  
answer neigh.

Go watch your farmers when  
some northeast storm  
Has strewn the beach with  
treasure all along  
When they have toiled all day to  
build their pile.  
Then coming to this bridge  
methinks they'll smile  
And say, we are almost home,  
now this is grand!  
But hard it was, to make them  
understand  
That drawing kelp, and rockweed  
through the sand  
Was not an easy way to fertilize  
the land.

Some like to travel in the beaten  
tracks  
They think perhaps to change

might raise the tax.

They'd sooner chop their wood  
with battered axe  
Than buy a stone for fear it might  
collapse.

But what is worst of all they take  
no pride  
In building up their town, to stand  
beside  
Their neighbors in improvements  
of the day,  
Electric roads, deep water in the  
bay,  
Facilities for talking with your  
friends,  
On which a town's prosperity  
depends;  
For he who gets the news an hour  
late,  
Is way behind and out of date.

We often hear it said, our  
Plymouth friends  
Think though the world is large,  
they hold both ends  
And everything of note must pass  
that way.  
And that's the reason why we see  
today  
Their beach repaired, their  
shallow harbor dredged,  
New railroads in construction;  
wharves new fledged,  
Houses by dozens, rise like  
Jonah's gourd,  
While here in this old town we  
can't afford  
To have new houses, scarcely one  
a year.

And what's the cause? Why  
friends its just as clear  
As the nose upon your face for in  
this town  
Instead of crying up; they cry it  
down.

And if a stranger comes to pitch  
his tent  
They gather round, and say, you  
will repent,  
The town is bankrupt; all her soil  
is sand;  
And he who settles here is surely  
D--d.

But let me add, to close these  
simple lines,  
That if they ever hope for better  
times,  
For less taxation than we've had  
before,  
Let every mother's son along the  
shore  
Hoist up his flag and nail it to the  
mast;  
And when he sees a stranger  
sailing past,  
Cry out to him though, he be on a  
raft,  
To throw his line, and we will  
make him fast.  
Then tell him, that we want him  
in our mess,  
We want his money and his  
strength, no less  
To help us buy this town a brand  
new dress,  
And do away with all pig  
headedness.